

SOME EARLY RECORDS OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON.

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THE publication of this paper is suggested by the present general interest in the status of the Passenger Pigeon awakened partly by the appearance of Mr. W. B. Mershon's recent volume¹ and partly by the numerous rewards now offered for the discovery of living representatives of the species. The records were gathered as a "by-product" incidental to an inquiry into the primitive fauna of Central New York. From the local nature of this inquiry and the writer's lack of familiarity with purely historical literature and methods this compilation is necessarily incomplete. It is hoped that wider and fuller inquiries may be made by others. The writer is greatly indebted to the officials of the Cornell University Library for aid in utilizing the rare collections of Andrew D. White, Jared S. Sparks and Goldwin Smith. And lastly my especial acknowledgments are due Prof. Burt G. Wilder for kindly advice and criticisms.

Naturalists are prone to complain because the voluminous records of the Jesuits in New France are so crowded with their hopes, their struggles and the detailed descriptions of individual conversions, while only occasionally does an observant father remark upon the natural objects at his very hand. Still, taken altogether they furnish considerable information.

In their very first Relations, 1610-1613 (Acadia), they mention the great abundance of pigeons as the present note will indicate:²

"The birds are fully as abundant as the fishes. During certain months of the year the pigeons sally forth from the woods into the open country in such great numbers that they overload the branches of the trees. When they have settled upon the trees at night they are easily captured and the savages heap their tables with royal abundance."

In Huron folklore pigeons entered, as Le Jeune, 1636, shows:³

¹ The Passenger Pigeon. New York, 1907.

² Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents. By R. G. Thwaites and others, 1896. Vol. I, p. 253.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. X, pp. 143, 287.

“At the feast of the Dead, which takes place about every twelve years, the souls quit the cemeteries, and in the opinion of some are changed into Turtle doves (*possibly our mourning doves*), which they pursue later in the woods, with bow and arrow, to broil and eat.” According to Lescarbot, 1612 (Acadia), a dying Indian chief named Martin,¹ “when the Patriarch and a man named de Montfort had caught him, and made him eat some wild pigeon, which he liked very much, he asked them as they were speaking to him about Heaven, if there would be any wild pigeon there.” In other instances, pigeons served as gifts to sick, as² “Monsieur de Repentigny, his Godfather, visited him often in his sickness, and sent him sometimes a few eggs, sometimes some Pigeons, . . .” Or, as frequently, the fathers themselves received them from the officials, as,³ “There were sent us by Monsieur the Governor, . . . 8 young pigeons; . . .” And again, in their Journal for 1646 they record that⁴ “On the 3rd or fourth of January, Monsieur the Governor sent 6 . . . pigeons.”

The early fathers noticed their seasonal appearance. Le Jeune, 1637, likened the Savages to the pigeons.⁵ “Our Savages are always savage, they resemble the migratory birds of their own country. In one season turtle doves are sometimes found in such abundance that the end of their army cannot be seen when they are flying in a body; at other times in the same season they appear only in small flocks.” One father (Relations of 1656–57) in particular considered this migration one of the three remarkable facts of natural history in America.⁶ “The second [fact] is, that, in the Spring, so great numbers of Pigeons collect around these salt-springs, that sometimes as many as seven hundred are caught in the course of one morning.” The same observation held for Montezuma (Cayuga Lake), 1671–72⁷: “Four leagues from here (*Cayuga mission*) I saw by the side of a river, within a very limited space, eight or ten extremely fine salt-springs. Many snares are

¹ Jesuit Relations, Vol. II, 155.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 65. Le Jeune, 1636 (Quebec).

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXX, p. 153. (1647.)

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 145.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 81.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. XLIII, p. 153. (Onondaga Lake.)

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. LVI, p. 49.

set there for catching pigeons, from seven to eight hundred being often taken at once."

Of the abundance of pigeons Vivier among the Illinois writes as follows:¹ "During a portion of the autumn, through the winter, and during a portion of the spring, the country is overrun with swans, . . . wild pigeons, and teal." Gravier on his voyage through the Mississippi valley in 1700 says:² "We saw so great a number of wood-pigeons that the sky was quite hidden by them." Or, early in 1616 Biard in Acadia says,³ "there are a great many wild pigeons, which come to eat raspberries in the month of July, . . ." And, lastly, the Relations of 1662-63 give in some detail the pigeons of the St. Lawrence county.⁴ "Among the birds of every variety to be found here, it is to be noted that Pigeons abound in such numbers that this year one man killed a hundred and thirty-two at a single shot. They passed continually in flocks so dense, and so near the ground, that sometimes, they were struck down with oars. This season they attacked the grain fields, where they made great havoc, after stripping the woods and fields of strawberries and raspberries, which grow here everywhere underfoot. But when these Pigeons were taken in requital, they were made to pay the cost very heavily; for the Farmers, besides having plenty of them for home use, and giving them to their servants, and even to their dogs and pigs, salted caskfuls of them for the winter."

Besides the foregoing citations there are among the Jesuit Relations some three or four stray notes of hunting pigeons, the most important being in Marquette's Journal (Illinois) where he records⁵ that "we killed 30 pigeons, which I found better than those down the great river; but they are smaller, both old and young."

In New England, only shortly after the Jesuits began to record the wild pigeon, do we find the first account of this species. A Mr. Higgeson in 1629 writes of them as follows:⁶ "In the winter

¹ Jesuit Relations, Vol. LXIX, p. 145.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. LXX, pp. 109, 111.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 81, 83.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. XLVIII, p. 177.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. LIX, p. 181.

⁶ Higgeson, Mr. New England Plantations. Written in 1629. Mass. Hist. Soc. Colls., Vol. I, p. 121.

time I have seene flockes of pidgeons, and have eaten of them: They doe fly from tree to tree as other birds doe, which our pigeons will not doe in England: They are of all colours as ours are, but their wings and tayles are far longer, and therefore it is likely they fly swifter to escape the terrible hawkes in this country."

Not long after John Josselyn gave us a better account:¹ "The *Pidgeon*, of which there are millions of millions, I have seen a flight of *Pidgeons* in the spring and at *Michaelmas* when they return back to the Southward for four or five miles, that to my thinking had neither beginning nor ending, length or breadth, and so thick that I could see no Sun, they join Nest to Nest, and Tree to Tree by their Nests many miles together in Pine-Trees. But of late they are much diminished, the *English* taking them with Nets. I have bought at *Boston* a dozen of *Pidgeons* ready pull'd and garbidgd for three pence."

In 1649 in "A Perfect Description of Virginia, etc. London," (p. 17) "Pidgeons" occurs in the list of birds. Of the same region, "A True Relation of Virginia and Maryland, etc. By Nathaniel Shrigley, London, 1669" (p. 4) says that "Fowle naturally to the Land are Eagles. . . .Turkies, . . .Pidgions, . . . and many sorts more." Just preceding LaHontan, Thomas Budd in 1685 in his "Good Order Established in Pennsilvania and New Jersey in America" (New York ed., 1760, p. 36) remarks that "The Woods are furnished with a store of Wild Fowl as *Turkeys*, . . . *Pidgeons*, etc."

The celebrated LaHontan, in a letter dated at Boucherville, May 28, 1687, writes of the pigeons as follows:² "In a word, we eat nothing but Water-fowl for fifteen Days; after which we resolv'd to declare War against the Turtle-Doves, which are so numerous in *Canada*, that the Bishop has been forced to excommunicate 'em oftner than once, upon the account of the Damage they do to the Product of the Earth. With that view, we imbarqued and made towards a Meadow, in the Neighborhood of which, the Trees were cover'd with that sort of Fowl more than with Leaves: For just then 'twas the season in which they retire from the North Countries, and repair to the Southern Climates;

¹ Josselyn, John. *An Account of Two Voyages to New England Made during the Years 1633, 1663.* Boston, 1865, p. 79.

² LaHontan, *New Voyages to North America*, Vol. I, pp. 61, 62. London, 1703.

and one would have thought that all the Turtle-Doves upon Earth had chose to pass thro' this place. For the eighteen or twenty days that we stay'd there, I firmly believe that a thousand Men might have fed upon 'em heartily, without putting themselves to any trouble." In two other places¹ does he mention them; in the latter instance, to include them in his "List of the Fowl or Birds that frequent . . . Canada"; and in the former, merely to note that "the Turtle-Doves had all passed over the place, in quest of their Southern retreats, . . ."

In the same year (1687) Richard Blome in his "The Present State of His Majesties Isles and Territories in America," published in London, enumerates the wild pigeons in four places. In New Jersey (p. 80) he says, "The Counterey is well stored with *Wild Deer*, . . . and wild fowl of several sorts; as Turkeys, Pigeons . . . in great plenty." In Pennsylvania (p. 94), "Of Fowls of the Land there is the Turkey . . . Pheasants, . . . Pigeons . . . in abundance." In Virginia (p. 189), "They have great plenty of Fowl; as . . . Pigeons, . . ." And finally, comes an isolated note (p. 252), "Then there is the Wood Pigeon; . . ."

The year following (1688) Mr. John Clayton speaks of the almost incredible stories he has heard about the pigeon. He says,² "Their Turtle-Doves are of a duskish blue Colour, much less than our common Pigeon: the whole Train is longer much than the Tails of our Pigeons, the middle Feather being the longest. There is the strangest Story of a vast Number of these Pigeons that came in a Flock a few Years before I came thither; They say they came thro' *New England, New York* and *Virginia* and were so prodigious in Number as to darken the Sky for several Hours in the place over which they flew, and broke massive Boughs where they light, many like things which I have had asserted to me by many Eye-witness of Credit, that to me it was without doubt, the Relators being very sober Persons, and all agreeing in a story: Nothing of the like ever happen'd since, nor did I ever see past ten in a Flock together that I remember. I am not fond of such Stories, and had suppressed the relating of it, but that I have heard the same from very many."

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63 and 237.

² Clayton, John. A Letter from Mr. John Clayton to the Royal Society May 12, 1688, Giving an Account of several Observables in Virginia, etc., p. 30.

In 1698, Hennepin, the first to describe Niagara Falls, says¹ the lower Mississippi "Country affords all sorts of Game, as Turkey-Cocks, . . . , and Wood Pidgeons; . . ." And, on his return eastward from Niagara he says, "We had still Fourscore Leagues to go upon the Lake *Ontario* before we cou'd arrive at Fort *Catarokouri* or *Frontenac*; . . . We wanted then neither Powder nor Shot, and therefore shot at random all that we met, either small Birds, or Turtles, and Wood-Pigeons, which were then coming from Foreign Countries in so great Numbers, that they did appear in the Air like Clouds."

This same year (1698), Gabriel Thomas in "An Historical and Geographical Account of the Province and Country of Pensilvania and West New Jersey in America. London, 1698," finds (p. 13) "in (the) place there are an Infinite Number of Sea and Land Fowl, of most sorts. viz. *Swans*, . . . *Pidgeons*. . . ."

Three years later Charles Wolley in "A Two Years Journal in New York. London, 1701," (New York ed., 1860, p. 37) practically repeats the same observation, namely, "They have great store of wild-fowl, as *Turkeys*, . . . *Pigeons*, . . ."

Some time passes before we come to Daniel Coxe's "A Description of the English Province of Carolina, etc. London, 1726" where we have the following (2nd edit., p. 79): "Great companies of *Turkies*, . . . *Pidgeons*, . . ." Again in 1732, "A Letter From South Carolina, etc.," speaks much to the same effect (2nd edit., London, p. 13): "There are . . . great variety of Wild-Fowl, as *Turkeys*, . . . wild *Pigeons*, . . ."

In 1744 Charlevoix in his History of New France enumerates the wild pigeons as occurring in Florida² but only once,³ speaks of them in detail. "The pigeons are there (New France), as elsewhere, birds of passage. A missionary observed, in an Iroquois canton, that every morning, from six o'clock till eleven, the air above the gorge in the river, about a quarter of a league wide, was seen to be completely darkened by the number of these birds; that afterwards they all descended to bathe in a large pond near

¹ Hennepin, L. *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America, etc.* London, 1698, pp. 137, 225.

² Charlevoix, Rev. P. F. X. De. *History of New France, 1744.* Translated by J. G. Shea. New York, 1866. Vol. I, p. 140.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 192.

by, and then disappeared. He adds, that only the males are then seen, but that the females come in the afternoon to go through the same manoeuvre."

On his journey from Pennsylvania to Owego, John Bartram in 1743 found north of Oswego, N. Y. ¹ "all the trees were crouded with wild pigeons, which, I suppose, breed in these lofty shade trees."

Shortly afterwards Peter Kalm, a Swedish naturalist, spent three years in travel in North America (1747-1750). In his "Travels into North America" he twice speaks of the wild pigeons. First during October, 1748, he observes ² that "In the same manner I have seen *wild Pigeons*, which were made so tame as to fly out and return again. In some winters there are immense quantities of wild pigeons in *Pensylvania*." The other note ³ comes in March, 1749, when "*Wild Pigeons (Columba migratoria)*, flew in the woods, in numbers beyond conception and I was assured that they were more plentiful than they had been for several years past. They came this week, and continued here for about a fortnight, after which they all disappeared, or advanced further into the country, from whence they came. I shall speak of them more particularly in another place." This "another place" must be in some other writings of Kalm than his Travels for I searched these with this expressly in view.

Some ten years later, the Rev. Andrew Bernaby, while travelling from Rhode Island to Boston in the month of September, says:⁴ "During the course of my ride from Newport I observed prodigious flights of wild pigeons: they directed their course southward, and the hemisphere was never intirely free from them. They are birds of passage, of beautiful plumage, and are excellent eating. The accounts given of their numbers are almost incredible; yet they are so well attested, and opportunities of proving the truth of them are so frequent, as not to admit of their being

¹ Bartram, John. Observations on the Inhabitants, etc., in Travels from Pennsylvania to Lake Ontario. London, 1751, p. 36.

² Kalm, Peter. Travels into North America. Translated into English by J. R. Forster. Warrington, 1770. Vol. I, p. 210.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 82.

⁴ Bernaby, Rev. Andrew. Travels through the Middle Settlements in North America in the years 1759 and 1760. London, 1798. 3rd edition, pp. 101, 102.

called in question. Towards evening they generally settle upon trees, and sit one upon another in such crowds, as sometimes to break down the largest branches. The inhabitants at such times, go out with long poles, and knock numbers of them on the head upon the roost; for they are either so fatigued by their flight, or terrified by the obscurity of the night, that they will not move, or take wing, without some great and uncommon noise to alarm them. I met with scarcely any other food at the ordinaries where I put up: and during their flight, the common people subsist almost wholly upon them."

About two years later (May, 1762), Alexander Henry on a trip from Michilimackinac to Sault de Sainte-Marie found¹ "Pigeons were in great plenty."

In the period from 1763 to 1795 occur three short notes. In 1766, William Stork gives us "An Account of East Florida, etc. London, 1766," but abstains from giving any data or stories about the pigeon because (p. 51), "The wild pigeons, for three months in the Year, are in such Plenty here, that an account of them would seem incredible." In 1778, J. Carver, London, wrote his "Travels through the Interior Parts of North America in the years 1766, 1767, and 1768," and 1802, Anthony Haswell, Bennington, Vt., published the "Memoirs and Adventures of Capt. Matthew Phelps, 1773-1780." Both (the first on p. 466, the second, Appendix, p. 55) merely mention the pigeons as among the birds recorded on their respective trips.

At the very last of the eighteenth century Isaac Weld, Junior, spent the years 1795, 1796 and 1797 in travels in North America. While on a trip from Montreal to Kingston in the month of September, he remarks² that "As we passed along, we had excellent diversion in shooting pigeons, several large flights of which we met with in the woods. The wild pigeons of Canada are not unlike the common English wood pigeons, except that they are of a much smaller size; their flesh is very well flavored. During particular

¹ Henry, Alexander. *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories Between the Years 1760 and 1776*. New ed., by James Bain. Boston, 1901, p. 63.

² Weld, Isaac, Junior. *Travels through the States of North America, etc. During the years 1795, 1796, 1797*. London, 1799. 2d edition. Vol. II, pp. 42, 43, 44.

years, these birds come down from the northern regions in flights that it is marvellous to tell of. A gentleman of the town of Niagara assured me, that once as he was embarking there on board ship for Toronto, a flight of them was observed coming from that quarter; that as he sailed over Lake Ontario to Toronto forty miles distant from Niagara, pigeons were seen flying over head the whole way in a contrary direction to that in which the ship proceeded; and that on arriving at the place of his destination, the birds were still observed coming down from the north in as large bodies as had been noticed at any one time during the whole voyage; supposing, therefore, that the pigeons moved no faster than the vessel, the flight, according to this gentleman's account, must at least have extended eighty miles. Many persons may think this story surpassing belief; for my own part, however, I do not hesitate to give credit to it, knowing as I do, the respectability of the gentleman who related it, and the accuracy of his observation. When these birds appear in such great numbers, they often light on the borders of rivers and lakes, and in the neighborhood of farm houses, at which time they are so unwary, that a man with a short stick might easily knock them down by hundreds. It is not oftener than once in seven or eight years, perhaps, that such large flocks of these birds are seen in the country. The years in which they appear are denominated 'pigeon years.'

The first note in the nineteenth century comes the first year, when Alexander Henry, in his journal, writes, Apr. 11, 1800, that, "I embarked in my canoe for Portage la Prairie. Weather excessively hot. Wild pigeons passing N. in great abundance." Again, on the 23rd of April, 1802, when on the east side of the Red River he says¹ "River clear of ice. Pigeons passing N."

"The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike," by the same editor,² shows that Pike on a trip from Leech River to St. Louis, April 28, 1806, "Stopped at some islands about ten miles above Salt River, where there were pigeon-roosts, and in about 15 minutes my men had knocked on the head and brought on board 298.

¹ Henry, Alexander, *The Manuscript Journals of*. By Elliott Coues. Three vols., New York, 1897. Vol. I, pp. 4 and 195.

² Pike, Zebulon Montgomery, *The Expeditions of, During the Years 1805-6-7*. New Edition. By Elliott Coues. 3 vols. New York, 1895. Vol. I, p. 212.

I had frequently heard of the fecundity of this bird and never gave credit to what I then thought inclined to the marvellous; but really the most fervid imagination cannot conceive their numbers. Their noise in the woods was like the continued roaring of the wind, and the ground may be said to have been absolutely covered with their excrement. The young ones which we killed were nearly as large as the old; they could fly about ten steps, and were one mass of fat; their craws were filled with acorns and the wild pea. They were still reposing on their nests, which were merely small bunches of sticks joined, with which all the small trees were covered. Met four canoes of the Saes, with wicker baskets filled with young pigeons. They made motions to exchange them for liquor, to which I returned the back of my hand."

Later, in the same year, we have another note of interest when Thomas Ashe, while at Erie, Pa., in December, 1806, finds the same fondness for salt springs which the Jesuits remarked in 1656. He writes¹ as follows: "The salt lake and springs are also frequented by all the other kinds of beasts, and even by birds; and from the most minute enquiries, I am justified in asserting that their visitations were periodical; except doves, which appear to delight in the neighborhood of impregnated springs, and to make them their constant abode. In such situations they are seen in immense numbers, as tame as domestic pigeons, but rendered more interesting by their solitary notes and plaintive melody."

The succeeding year Pursh makes a botanical observation which is interesting in this connection. When at Martin Creek, Pa., he says:² "This morning I took an excursion accompanied by — who wanted to show me the Leek or Pigeon pea, as he calls it. . . . The Pigeon berries or Pigeon peas we could not find, untill we returned to the house, where a place was where they commonly grow: in howing up some ground they showed me the roots by which I found them, to be probably nothing else, than the tuberculis of a species of *Glycine*, resembling marrowfat peas very much: the pigeons scratch them up at certain times of the year and feed upon them very greedily."

¹ Ashe, Thomas, Esq. *Travels in America.* Performed in 1806. London, 1808, pp. 49, 50.

² Pursh, Frederick, *Journal of. The Gardener's Monthly*, Vol. XI, pp. 14, 15.

At the same time, James Mease discusses¹ the pigeon at some length. "The *columba migratoria*, or common wild pigeon of the United States, winters in the woods of the southern states and Florida, and pass over to the Bahama Islands. After their return in the Autumn to their Winter quarters, they sometimes, in mild Winters, remain in the middle and northern states. During the present season (1806-7), which, upon the whole, has not been severe, they were occasionally seen in our markets. The rev. Mr. Hall gives us the following curious account of the pigeon roosts in the Mississippi territory.

"Another curiosity, which occurred to my view, was the pigeon roost on a branch of Big Black, about sixty miles below the Chickasaw nation. An account of the phenomenon there exhibited, carries with it such an air of the marvellous, that, had I been the only spectator, it would have been passed over in silence. The pigeons had taken their station in and about a place known by the name of the Hurricane Swamp. The greater part of the large timber had been blown down, and they had perched on the branches of the small timber that remained; and which, being broken by them, now hung down like the inverted bush of a broom. Under each tree and sappling, lay an astonishing quantity of dung, of which, from the specimens we saw, there must have been not only hundreds, but thousands, of waggon loads. Round each resting place was an hillock raised a considerable height above the surface, although the substance had been there eighteen months when we made our observations on the place. At that time the heaps were, no doubt, greatly sunk. What bounds they occupied we could not ascertain as the swamp was so full of brambles and fallen timber that we could not leave the road. It is near a mile in diameter; and as far as I can recollect, their traces were the chief part of the way, and about an hundred paces on the north side of the swamp.'

"To give an idea of the number and weight of these pigeons, Mr. H. then relates, that a hickory tree, of more than a foot in diameter, was alighted on by so many of these birds, that its top was bent down to the ground, and its roots started a little on the

¹ Mease, James. *A Geological Account of the United States, etc.* Philadelphia, 1807, pp. 3417-3149.

opposite side, so as to raise a bank. Trees of a brittle structure were often broken off by them.

"We leave our readers to ponder these things without comment of ours.

"The Rev. Mr. Harris, of Massachusetts, in his 'Tour to the State of Ohio,' gives an account equally curious, of the pigeon roosts of that state."

The "Mr. Harris" of whom Mease speaks is Thaddeus Mason Harris who "Made in the Spring of the Year 1803," "A Tour into the Territory Northwest of the Alleghany Mountains." His account¹ of the pigeon roosts follows: "The vast flights of pigeons in this country seem incredible. But there is a large forest in Waterford, containing several hundred acres, which has been killed in consequence of their lighting upon it during the autumn of 1801. Such numbers lodged upon the trees that they broke off large limbs; and the ground below is covered, and in some places a foot thick, with their dung, which has not only killed all the undergrowth but all the trees are dead as if they had been girdled.

"This account which I received from credible persons at Waterford when I was there, May 13, 1803 is confirmed by a letter written me since my return, by my much-esteemed friend, the Rev. Mr. Story, dated Marietta, June 3, 1803. 'I have visit two pigeon roosts, and have heard of a third. Those I have seen are astonishing. One is supposed to cover one thousand acres: the other is still larger. The destruction of timber and brush on such tracts of land by these small animals is almost incredible. How many millions of them must have assembled to effect it! especially as it was done in the course of a few weeks! A more particular statement will be given this subject in a communication I intend making, agreeably to your request, to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.'"

In 1810 (April 18), John Bradbury, while proceeding to the country around the Naduet River² "soon discovered that pigeons were in the woods. I returned and exchanged my rifle for a fowling

¹ Mason, Thaddeus Mason. *The Journal of A Tour into the Territory Northwest of the Alleghany Mountains; Made in the Spring of the Year 1803, etc.* Boston, 1805, pp. 179, 180.

² Bradbury, John. *Travels in the Interior of America in the Years 1809, 1810, 1811, etc.* Liverpool, 1817, pp. 44, 45.

piece, and in a few hours shot 271, when I desisted. I had an opportunity this day of observing the manner in which they feed; it affords a most singular spectacle, and is also an example of the rigid discipline maintained by gregarious animals. This species of pigeon associates in prodigious flocks: one of these flocks, when on the ground, will cover an area of several acres in extent, and are so close to each other that the ground can scarcely be seen. This phalanx moves through the woods with considerable celerity, picking up as it passes along, every thing that will serve for food. It is evident that the foremost ranks must be the most successful, and nothing will remain for the hindermost. That all may have an equal chance, the instant that any rank becomes the last, they rise, and flying over the whole flock, alight exactly ahead of the foremost. They succeed each other with so much rapidity, that there is a continued stream of them in the air; and a side view of them exhibits the appearance of the segment of a large circle, moving through the woods. I observed that they cease to look for food a considerable time before they become the last rank, but strictly adhere to their regulations, and never rise until there are none behind them."

In 1819, Fearon, while in the Illinois country, found,¹ "hawks, buzzards, and pigeons in tolerable quantities."

About the same time, the famous Schoolcraft,² "in walking along some parts of the shore, observed a great number of the skeletons and half-consumed bodies of the pigeon, which, in crossing the lake, is often overtaken by severe tempests, and compelled to alight upon the water, and thus drowned, in entire flocks, which are soon thrown up along the shores. This causes the shores of Lake Michigan to be visited by vast numbers of buzzards, eagles and other birds of prey. The Indians also make use of these pigeons, as food, when they are first driven ashore, preserving such in smoke, as they have not immediate occasion for."

Two years later Howison writes³ of the pigeon as follows: "Long

¹ Fearon, Henry Bradshaw. *Sketches of America: etc.* London, 1819. 3rd edition, p. 257.

² Schoolcraft, Henry R. *Narrative Journal of Travels from Detroit Northwest . . . in the year 1820.* Albany, 1821, p. 381 (Aug. 25).

³ Howison, John. *Sketches of Upper Canada.* Edinburgh, 1822. 2nd edition, pp. 174, 175.

Point abounds with game of various kinds. . . . Immense flocks of the passenger or wild pigeon, frequent this and other parts of Upper Canada during the spring and autumn; and myriads of them are killed by firearms, or caught in nets by the inhabitants; for they fly so close, and in such numbers, that twenty or thirty may sometimes be brought down at a single shot."

In 1827 John Lee Williams in "A View of West Florida" (p. 30) gives the "Pigeon — *Columba migratoria*" — as "rare". Again, in 1837, in "The Territory of Florida, etc. New York. 1837" (p. 74) he says, "This kind is not so numerous in general, as the turtle dove, and ground dove."

A more or less extended characterization of the species comes in 1829, when Macauley wrote¹ the following summary: "The pigeon is a migratory bird. In spring they pass to the north, where they spend the summer, and in autumn they return to the south, where they spend the winter. The periods of their arrival and departure are not well defined. Sometimes they come as early as the latter part of March, while at other times, a month later. This seems to depend on the season, their arrival being earlier or later, according to the forwardness or backwardness of the spring. They pass in their periodical migrations, in flocks, which vary greatly in numbers. Some extend a mile or two in length, and consist of a countless multitude, while others are small. The flocks are often seen following each other in quick succession, and at short intervals. These migrations frequently continue for several days. After their arrival, they remain in flocks, for a short time, and then disperse in pairs in order to breed. They build their nests on trees, and usually have two young at a time. They hatch every month. They subsist on mast, wheat, peas, oats, rye, and insects. . . . They are rather smaller than the domestic pigeon, and are good food. The domestic and wild pigeon do not breed together. The accounts which are given of the number of pigeons in the uncultivated country, will appear almost incredible to those who have never seen their nests. Sometimes they occupy several hundred acres with their nests. Twenty, and even thirty nests have been counted on one tree."

¹ Macauley, James. *The Natural, Statistical and Civil History of the State of New York.* New York, 1829. 3 vols. Vol. I, pp. 495, 496.

In 1832, Timothy Flint remarks¹ that, "Pigeons sometimes are seen in great flocks. Their social and gregarious habits incline them to roost together, and their places of resort are called 'pigeon roosts.' In these places they settle on all the trees for a considerable distance around, in such numbers, as to break off the branches."

In the same year, Vigne notes² "the woodcock, snipe, pigeons and wild fowl, in great abundance," and says, "I amused myself with shooting pigeons which are to be found on the island (Mackinac) in great numbers. I was quite surprised at the extraordinary facility and quickness of eye, with which my guide, half Indian and half Canadian, discovered them sitting in the thickest foliage."

Some years later Hugh Murray gives³ a more pertinent note when he marvels at the numbers in the pigeon flocks. "But no bird equals in number the wild pigeons which, at particular seasons, move in vast flocks, or rather swarms, that darken the air like locusts. A body of them once hovered three or four days over the capital, when a continued war was carried on against them by all who could muster fire-arms of any description. The feathered tribes, in unfrequented places, fall easy victims, owing to their having no fear of man."

And, finally, in 1844, Featherstonhaugh in an "Excursion through The Slave States":⁴ "A new and very interesting spectacle presented itself, in the incredible quantities of wild pigeons that were abroad; flocks of them many miles long came across the country, one flight succeeding to another, obscuring the daylight, and in their swift motion creating a wind, and producing a rushing and startling sound, that cataracts of the first class might be proud of. These flights of wild pigeons constitute one of the most remarkable phenomena of the western country. I remember once, when amongst the Indians, seeing the woods loaded from top to

¹ Flint, Timothy. *The History and Geography of the Mississippi Valley*. Second edition. Cincinnati, 1832. Vol. I, p. 73.

² Vigne, Godfrey T. *Six Months in America*. 2 vols. London, 1832. Vol. I, p. 89; vol. II, p. 115.

³ Murray, Hugh. *An Historical and Descriptive Account of British America*. 3 vols. Edinburgh, 1839. Vol. I, p. 350.

⁴ Featherstonhaugh, G. W. *Excursion through The Slave States*. New York, 1844, p. 88 (Arkansas).

bottom with their nests for a great number of miles, the heaviest branches of the trees broken and fallen to the ground, which was strewn with the young birds dead and alive, that the Indians in great numbers were picking up to carry away with their horses; many of their dogs were said to be gone mad with feeding upon their putrified remains. A forest thus loaded and half destroyed with these birds, presents an extraordinary spectacle which cannot be rivalled; but when such myriads of timid birds as the wild pigeon are on the wing, often wheeling and performing evolutions almost as complicated as pyrotechnic movements, and creating whirlwinds as they move, they present an image of the most fearful power. Our horse, Missouri, at such times, has been cowed by them, that he would stand still and tremble in his harness, whilst we ourselves were glad when their flight was directed from us."

THE BREWSTER'S WARBLER IN MASSACHUSETTS.

BY JULIA WINGATE SHERMAN.

EARLY Sunday morning, May 19, 1907, my daughter and I went on a bird-walk near our home in Roslindale, which is one of the many beautiful suburbs of Boston. When a short distance from the house we heard a Golden-winged Warbler give his *zee-zee-zee*, as I then supposed. My daughter not having seen one that season, we stepped out of our path to take a look at the singer. Imagine my surprise — not a Golden-winged but a fine male Brewster's Warbler was perched before us. He sang over and over again his high, lazily given song which so closely resembles that of the Golden-wing that it could easily be mistaken for it. On careful listening, at close range, it seemed higher and finer in quality. This specimen was in fine typical plumage, but was wholly white underneath. He kept for some time on a low, isolated, gray birch where he showed himself in all lights.

We continued our walk in the direction of Tom William's Pond.